

Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation Investment Strategies Committee

Final Meeting Summary

November 10, 1999

(Approved December 8, 1999)

Present: Dale Stedman, Chair, Bill Lampson, Vice-Chair, Ted Bottiger, Don Briscoe, Peter Hurley, John Kelly, Representative Maryann Mitchell, Charles Mott

Absent: Bettie Ingham, Senator Mary Margaret Haugen, Patricia Otley

The Chair called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. The minutes from the October 14 meeting were reviewed and changes were made. The Committee then approved the minutes as amended.

Chairman Dale Stedman then briefly summarized the November 9 Steering Committee, noting that it has become clear that the Governor and the Legislative leadership are looking to the Blue Ribbon Commission now more than ever for recommended solutions to the state's transportation problems.

He also outlined the Commission's outreach strategy. A number of forums are planned this fall with stakeholder groups. The Steering Committee also thought that the work of the Investment Strategies Committee and the Administration Committee (efficiencies, priorities, and governance) should be the focus before the Revenue options were recommended. The Chair also said that outreach would include articles in company and employee newsletters as well as work with traditional media.

In response to Committee requests, the Chair asked staff that Steering Committee meeting notices be sent to all Committee members.

Initiative 695 Discussion

A lengthy discussion of the November 2 passage of Initiative 695 ensued. (Initiative 695 reduces the motor vehicle excise tax – MVET – to \$30 per vehicle and requires a public vote on all tax and fee increases proposed by public agencies). I-695 passed with a 57% Yes vote.

A number of Committee members thought the I-695 vote had little to do with support for transportation. Members thought the vote showed a dissatisfaction with the unfairness of the MVET, a backlash against what many voters perceive as government wasting money,

and the fact that many people's budgets were overextended. A number of Committee members also said the public expressed a need for more leadership at all government levels on transportation issues, believing that without such leadership it will be difficult to resolve the state's transportation problems.

The discussion turned to whether the Commission should make a statement in the aftermath of I-695 to the public or to the Legislature. A Committee member suggested the Commission should draft a letter to each member of the Legislature saying, in effect, "Votes such as I-695 are not surprising to us given what we've seen in our review of transportation issues in the state. The Commission has expressed its concern in our Findings, and we will be proposing options to improve the current situation in the year 2000." The idea behind the letter is for the Commission to align itself with the public – lead the parade – in suggesting ways to overhaul the transportation system to improve efficiency. The Chair asked staff to convey the request to the project manager.

There was also discussion about whether or not the Commission should "move up" the release date of its report to the Legislature, now scheduled for December 1, 2000. Staff pointed out that the Steering Committee had considered a May or June 2000 release of recommended options, and for the current time at least, had rejected it. A number of Committee members said the recommended options should be released to the public during the summer of 2000. A number of Committee members said that grassroots support for the Commission's recommendations would be imperative if any changes were to occur.

There was a request to review the presentation material being prepared by Cocker Fennessy. Staff said Anne Fennessy likely would attend the December meeting and show the PowerPoint presentation, but some members asked for a hard copy of the slides as soon as possible.

Public Comment

A number of people spoke during the public comment period. Dan Snow of the Washington State Transit Association (WSTA) said transit was hit especially hard by the passage of I-695. He said WSTA would work with the Governor and Legislature to explore how transit could be assisted. Chris Mudgett of the County Road Administration Board said the board was uncertain about its budget after I-695, and its budget is all gas tax revenues. Doug Rauh of the Bainbridge Chamber of Commerce said there was no effective leadership on transportation at the state level. He said the message of I-695 was to do things differently. Susan Sanchez of the City of Seattle said local jurisdictions would be looking for more interjurisdictional cooperation to achieve transportation results.

Committee Options

The Committee then turned to developing Committee options. Mike Doubleday led a discussion of the matrix that had been developed with the assistance of Jerry Cormick to begin the Committee's discussion. There was considerable discussion about the matrix and its detail – the matrix's options were taken from the suggested solutions contained in the Committee's issue papers. Some members said the discussion should be framed around the Committee's Findings, and that options should be worked from that basis. Others stressed that recommended options should detail the advantages and disadvantages more clearly.

The Chair directed staff to prepare options for the December meeting that would work from the Committee Findings. The Chair also asked that overlapping Findings be identified and brought together.

The Committee adjourned at 11:52 a.m.